IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please amend the paragraph beginning on Page 16, line 10 as follows:

--In a specific embodiment described herein, the feline and canine MC4R genes were isolated by stringently hybridizing a specific non-degenerate oligonucleotide (ttgactctgtgatctgtagctccttgct (SEQ ID NO: 7)) tagged with biotin to clones in a feline and a canine cDNA library (each library was constructed by LifeTechnologies (Rockville, MD) using its SUPERSCRIPT™ cDNA library construction technology). The complex was separated from all other clones in the library using Streptaviden magnetic beads which were pelleted via a magnet. MC4R clones were identified by PCR using MC4R specific primer pairs designed to flank the capture oligonucleotide site (forward primer: atgaggcagatgatgacagc (SEQ ID NO: 8); reverse primer: gtgatctgtagctccttgc (SEQ ID NO: 9)). Six feline and one canine MC4R clones were isolated from the cDNA libraries. Of these, one feline clone and one canine clone were deposited on April 25, 2000, with the American Type Culture Collection (ATCC), 10801 University Boulevard, Manassas, VA 20110-2209 (under deposit numbers PTA-1762 and PTA-1761, respectively) . The identity of the clones was confirmed by PCR using different MC4R gene-specific primer pair (forward primer: tgagacatgaagcacac (SEQ ID NO: 10); reverse primer: gtgatctgtagctccttgc (SEQ ID NO: 9)). Sequencing of the MC4R genes was completed using one standard and three primer walking reactions from both ends of each clone. Sequences of the MC4R gene fragments have been assembled based on their overlapping regions. Conceptual translation of the open reading frames within each clone revealed that each comprised an MC4R-encoding nucleic acid. The open reading frame for the canine MC4R gene comprises nucleotides 447-1445 (Figure 2). The open reading frame for the feline MC4R gene comprises nucleotides 451-1449 (Figure 1).--